

ANA BACKGROUNDS: Influenza Season 2006-2007

Flu Vaccinations Underway

The 2006-2007 influenza season has arrived, and the flu vaccination process has begun, with nurses and other healthcare workers being given priority by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC recommends that priority groups, including “healthcare personnel who provide direct patient care,” receive the trivalent, inactivated vaccine preferably during October 2006, the month that all persons will become eligible for vaccination.

Based on discussions with influenza vaccine manufacturers and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates more than 100 million doses of influenza vaccine will be produced for the United States this year. This is 17 million more doses than ever distributed in any previous season. Furthermore, 75 million doses are projected for distribution by October 31st; therefore, once providers have vaccine, they are encouraged to **vaccinate anyone seeking vaccine**.

If vaccine produced in Canada is licensed for distribution in the US, there may be more than 110 million doses available this season. Because the supply projections are robust, no tiering on vaccination is recommended this season.

Background

Because the influenza vaccine directly affects nurses and their patients, ANA is involved with this issue, and has been active in shaping policy and legislation that relates to it. A member of the National Nursing Immunization Network, ANA representatives regularly participate in meetings with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other governmental bodies that oversee and regulate the issue. In addition, ANA is collaborating on and advocating for strategies that will negate future shortages, such as the one seen in the 2004-2005 flu season, with its other partners in the policy arena.

ANA Position on Getting Vaccinated

ANA strongly recommends that nurses and all other health care providers who have direct patient contact be vaccinated against the influenza virus. Because the influenza virus has the potential to greatly affect nurses and their patients, ANA is especially adamant about nurses receiving an annual influenza vaccination. ANA further maintains that nurses involved in direct patient care – and particularly nurses working with persons who have HIV/AIDS, are immuno-compromised or in other high-risk groups – get vaccinated against the flu in order to prevent any outbreaks of the virus.

ANA is encouraging nurses to get vaccinated in part because, according to the CDC, **fewer than 43 percent of health care professionals received immunizations against the flu virus last year**. ANA believes this is an alarmingly low percentage and one that is totally unnecessary, especially given health care professionals’ categorization as an

influenza high-risk group, their access to the vaccine and their daily contact with patients, many of whom also are in flu high-risk categories. Because influenza annually leads to 200,000 hospitalizations, resulting from complications, and 36,000 deaths each year, nurses who are vaccinated against the virus not only safeguard themselves, but they also help protect their patients, their families and their communities.

Influenza General Facts

- Approximately 36,000 people die each year as a result of the flu.
- More than 90 percent of influenza-related deaths occur in people age 65 and older.
- Fewer than 43 percent of health care professionals were vaccinated against the flu during the 2004-2005 flu season. ANA hopes to counteract this alarming and unacceptably high percentage through greater education and awareness among nurses.
- 10 percent to 20 percent of the general population gets influenza each year.
- Influenza season typically runs from November to March and can begin as early as October or as late as November.
- October and November are the best months in which to get a flu shot, but getting vaccinated in December or later will still help in preventing the spread of the flu.
- Scientists make a different vaccine every year because the strains of virus causing influenza change from year to year.
- Because the strands of flu viruses used in the trivalent influenza vaccine are “killed” following vaccination, they cannot cause infection.
- Antibodies take about two weeks to develop after getting vaccinated.
- Flu viruses spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from person to person but also can be spread from touching something with the influenza virus on it and then touching the mouth, eyes or nose.
- Healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning **one day before symptoms** develop and up to five days after becoming sick.
- Spread of the influenza virus may be prevented by using good hand-washing hygiene and respiratory etiquette (using a tissue or a handkerchief or coughing into one’s elbow, for example).
- For the upcoming 2006--07 influenza season, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has further extended its recommendation to include **annual influenza vaccinations for all children aged 6--59 months** (and their household contacts and out-of-home caregivers).
- Children are impacted by influenza, too. Among children aged zero to four years, hospitalization rates ranged from approximately five per thousand for children with low-risk medical conditions to one per thousand for children with our high-risk medical conditions. The hospitalization rates are highest among children aged zero to one year.
- During the 2003-2004 flu season, 152 children died from the flu.

- Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu and frequently spread the virus to others, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.
- In 2004, the first year all children 6-23 months were recommended for flu vaccination, the vaccination rate among children aged 6-23 months was up sharply from 7.7 percent in 2002 to 57.3 percent, according to the CDC.

ANA Advocacy Activities

- **CDC** – ANA regularly participates in conference calls held by the CDC to update the health provider community regarding the flu vaccine shortage.

Communications Outreach and Education

Media Outreach and Response – ANA regularly responds to media inquiries regarding flu vaccination preparedness from major media outlets. Please check this site for media updates as the 2006-2007 flu season progresses.

Member Education/Publications – Members have been updated on the influenza issue through:

- *The American Nurse* (“CDC gives health care workers priority flu immunization status” p. 13 September/October 2005 issue) and monthly during flu season through the *CMA Insider*.
- *American Journal of Nursing*, Increasing Influenza Vaccination of Health Care Workers, Dec 2005, 105(12), 96.

Updated CDC Influenza Reports

- Prevention and Control of Influenza: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). *MMWR: Recommendations and Reports*, July 28, 2006, 55(RR10), 1-42.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5510a1.htm>
- Childhood Influenza Vaccination Coverage--United States, 2004—2005 Influenza Season. *MMWR: Weekly*, October 6, 2006, 55(39), 1062-1065.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5539a1.htm>
- Guidelines and Recommendations: Infection Control Guidance for the Prevention and Control of Influenza in Acute-Care Facilities
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/healthcarefacilities.htm>
- Influenza Vaccination of Health Care Personnel. *MMWR: Recommendations and Reports*, February 24, 2006, 55(RR-2), 1-16.
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5502a1.htm>

Influenza Resources for Professionals

- CDC Background Influenza Information – <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/patiented.htm>
- CDC recommendations for Influenza Vaccination of Health-Care Workers - <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/hcw.htm>
- CDC Press Release: More than 100 Million Doses of Influenza Vaccine Expected To Be Available This Year. Wednesday, September 6, 2006
<http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/r060906b.htm>
- CDC guidelines for providers (including interim guidelines on the use of flu anti-viral drugs):
www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/treatment/index.htm
- Antiviral medications for Influenza (Updated September 26, 2006):
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/treatment/>
- Downloadable “**They count on You**” poster urging health care workers to get vaccinated –
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/posters_providers.htm#pnursesq
- National Influenza Vaccine Summit Newsletter (Issue 3/ August-September 2006)
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/bulletin/2006-07/bulletin3_100206.htm#2
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases “Focus on Flu” section –
<http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/focuson/flu/default.htm>
- National Foundation for Infectious Diseases- Influenza Immunization Among Health-Care Workers: **Call to Action**
<http://www.nfid.org/pdf/publications/calltoaction.pdf>
- Q&A for providers: www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/

Influenza Resources for Consumers

- CDC General Influenza Information – <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- CDC hotline: 1-800-CDCINFO
- HHS flu information for consumers:
www.hhs.gov/flu/

Vaccine Information Statements

- Live, Attenuated Influenza Vaccine –
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/provider.htm>